

REMARKS

Claims 3, 4 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 9, 12, 13, 16, 19-22, 24, 25, 29, and 30 have been amended to clarify the subject matter regarded as the invention. Claims 1-2 and 5-30 are pending.

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Blalock et al. (Pub. No. 2001/0047284) and further in view of Sheth (Pub. No. 2001/0032170). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

As amended, Claim 1 recites “assigning a first identifier to bidders in the first subset,” and “assigning a second identifier to the bidders in the second subset,” “wherein the first identifier is unknown to bidders in the second subset and wherein the second identifier is unknown to bidders in the first subset.” The Examiner has acknowledged that “Blalock does not explicitly teach, subset known to each bidder within the subset.” Sheth describes a system in which vendors selected from a list of known vendors are invited to participate in a private marketplace. (Sheth, [0086]). Additionally, those vendors selected to participate in the marketplace may be allowed to view the bids of other vendors based on a selection made by the private marketplace user. (Sheth, [0090]). Selecting **participants** from a list of known vendors and then optionally allowing **all** participants to view each other’s **bids** is not the same as an environment in which “the first identifier is unknown to bidders in the second subset and wherein the second identifier is unknown to bidders in the first subset” as recited in Claim 1. Therefore, Claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Independent Claims 12, 13, and 22 each recite a similar limitation and are therefore also believed to be allowable.

Claims 2-11 are dependent from claim 1 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

Claims 14-21 are dependent from claim 13 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

Claims 23-30 are dependent from claim 22 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

The foregoing amendments are not to be taken as an admission of unpatentability of any of the claims prior to the amendments.

Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested based on the preceding remarks. If at any time the Examiner believes that an interview would be helpful, please contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robyn Wagner
Registration No. 50,575
V 408-973-2596
F 408-973-2595

VAN PELT, YI & JAMES LLP
10050 N. Foothill Blvd., Suite 200
Cupertino, CA 95014